

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

11/4/2015

General Carter F. Ham
Chairman
National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA)
2530 Crystal Drive, Suite #5000
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear General Ham,

We write to thank you for the important work the National Commission is doing under your leadership to address core questions about the future of the Army. As the Commission begins to develop its recommendations, we believe that there are important lessons from New York the Commission can reference as it continues its study. Specifically, we urge you to consider how effectively New York has integrated its Army installations into the local communities, operating as a Total Force State to benefit the U.S. Army, as well as the reliance of those communities on the capabilities within the National Guard for both state and national needs.

Fort Drum, home to the 10th Mountain Division, demonstrates how an Active Duty installation and the local community can partner to enhance both the type and quality of services available to citizens and service members. While Fort Drum does not have a full-scale hospital or schools for military children on post, these services are provided by the local community at far less cost to the Army. Service members and their families receive care at local medical facilities, and their children attend the local schools.

As a result, these community providers are attune to the needs of our soldiers and military families, providing high levels of specialized care, social services, family support elements and of increasing relevance, a robust mental health care network which was previously nonexistent. At a time when many service members, veterans and their families find that community health providers across the country inadequately understand the specific needs of the military community, we recommend that the Commission consider replicating this model across the country.

In addition, Fort Drum is a Total Force installation. It is the premiere training facility in the Northeast, providing training opportunities for National Guard units from eleven states. These partnerships between the Active and Reserve components are of great importance for New York and other states within the region. New York's citizen soldiers come from every corner of the state and are our first line of defense during natural and man-made disasters. Our Army National Guard units have not only deployed overseas throughout the past 14 years, they have been absolutely critical in the responses to Hurricanes Sandy and Irene, blizzards and to other natural emergencies. Their ability to evacuate the sick and injured, provide satellite communications when none are available, and most importantly, be the first on the ground, have made them a welcome sight during some of the toughest emergencies New York has known.

Now, as in the future, our forces are adapting to meet evolving and emerging threats. New York remains a top target for our enemies, and we are reliant on our Guardsmen and women that provide WMD screening and response capabilities. We also strongly believe that the National Guard must be a critical piece of our country's cyber security strategy. They build and maintain relationships with state and local law enforcement and first responders, and their dual-hatted, federal and state service allows greater flexibility in responding to cyber-attacks on state, local, or privately-owned critical infrastructure. Tasking the Guard with this mission will also allow the Army to retain our top cyber operators, who might be enticed by the private sector, after having invested significant resources in their training.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, or for our staff to provide you with further information on these matters. Thank you for your service to our country and your leadership of the Commission charged with the difficult challenge of shaping the Army's future.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator